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### **Make Your Child’s First Teacher a More Qualified One**

*Brookings report stresses need for better training of early childhood educators,  
proposes creating charter colleges*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Millions of American children attend pre-K education programs, but too often, their teachers do not have the necessary training and skills to do their jobs. A new paper from the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program analyzes this challenge and calls for creation of charter colleges to train early-education teachers.

The paper, *Beyond Bachelor’s: A Case for Charter Colleges of Early Childhood Education*, notes the proven value of early-education programs but finds that lack of skills among pre-K teachers undercuts that value. Traditional university bachelor’s programs in education are not geared to meet the need for better training, so the authors recommend states create charter colleges for training pre-K teachers. These colleges would increase the supply of high-quality early educators and help those teachers secure better-paying jobs. This also would create a new educational model that could work in other fields.

The proposals in this report should inform state applications and U.S. Department of Education awards for the new Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grants announced this week.

“The more than 1.3 million Americans—nearly all of them women—who make their livings caring for other people’s children are doing critically important work,” said Sara Mead, Associate Partner with Bellwether Education Partners and co-author of the report. “Yet far too many of these workers are under-educated and underpaid. As a nation, we have decided to entrust our young children to other people, but we are not giving those people the training they need or the compensation they deserve.”

“Our nation cannot make a dent in the broader college completion challenge by focusing on white middle-class 18 year-olds—most of them already earn degrees,” added Kevin Carey, Policy Director at Education Sector and co-author of the report. “Ironically, this is a much more effective strategy for producing additional college degrees than requiring all early childhood teachers to earn bachelor’s degrees. It sends the people who are actually educating young children to colleges designed to serve them.”

Mead and Carey’s paper proposes states to build charter college systems that would directly address the training needs of early educators and increase opportunities for long-term professional development. Their recommendations include:

- **Define expectations and credentials that are linked to skills and workforce needs.** States should streamline “core competencies” of early educators and link them to training programs and certification credentials in order to directly maximize learning potential in the classroom.
- **Identify metrics of teacher knowledge and skills.** Charter colleges of early childhood education would bestow credentials when its students demonstrate effective tactics that improve a child’s learning process. This will require valid and reasonable observation measures, some of which are already in place in systems like Texas School Ready and CLASS.
- **Create and empower authorizers to grant charter colleges credentials and access to public funds.** These authorizing entities, whether state advisory councils, existing authorizers of public charter schools, or new entities created for this sole purpose, would be responsible for holding charter colleges accountable to maintaining an effective standard of early education.
- **Enforce systems of accountability and evaluation of a charter college’s efficacy.** These evaluation systems need to have valid and reasonable standards, be independent of the charter college itself, and be organized and funded by states and authorizers.

States will have the primary responsibility of developing charter colleges of early education, with cooperation from non-profit organizations, philanthropic foundations, and existing academic institutions. Federal, state, and local policymakers can further support this new model of education by enhancing the research and dissemination of best practices in early education training, effectively utilizing early childhood resources and local workforce development funds, and encouraging interstate collaboration to provide portability of ideas and systems in different labor markets.

The new paper is the latest release in the Brookings-Rockefeller Project on State and Metropolitan Innovation, which analyzes state policy challenges and offers effective strategies for policymakers to help states and metros recover from the recession and transform their economies. For more on this series, please visit: <http://www.brookings.edu/projects/state-metro-innovation.aspx>.

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